

Columns

Thumb wrestling a challenge for all ages

There is a silly game I play with my grandchildren called "Thumb Wrestling." The rules are simple. You lock hands with your opponent and stick your thumbs up. Both players should place their thumbs in mid-air so that they're facing one another. With the right-hand fingertips, grab your opponent's right-hand fingertips and clasp tight together.

Some players like to stick their thumb pads against one another. Start each game politely by showing respect for your opponent with a pre-combat ceremony. Each player bends his/her thumb down until it is adjacent to the opponent's thumb. Then, simultaneously, both players

So there I was By Pete Buckley



move their thumbs left and then right as they perform a dance-like ritual while reciting the phrase, "One, Two, Three, Four, I declare a thumb war." Our family of crazies will add a second rhyming sentence to this phrase, such as "One, Two, Three, Four, I declare a thumb war; five, six, seven, eight, beating Papa's a piece

of cake!" Yes, it's silly but it reflects the amusing nature of this thumb combat.

Once the rhyming ends you attempt to pin your opponent's thumb down while keeping yours up. Trying to catch one another's thumb sounds easier than it is. Once the wriggling and giggling commences, the game is up for

grabs. Some helpful hints to be a good thumb wrestler is to lie your thumb down and then go around your opponent's thumb when they swoop down in an attempt to press down on your thumb.

The only way to win in this game is to pin down the opponent's thumb for a set count. A count of 4 (sometimes we make it a count of 10) at the same pace as counting seconds, is ideal. Any less is usually too easy.

I tell you all this because of a recent incident involving thumb wrestling with my 5-year-old grandson, Sam. His mother was selling a couch on a social media site and the buyer, a 45-year-old woman,

and her 20-something daughter arrived to pick up her purchase. Sam was at the front door when the buyer arrived with her daughter and Sam was introduced to the buyers.

Sam always tries to make a good impression on people when he meets them the first time, so Sam engaged the older woman in some small talk as they walked into the house to view the couch. Sam said, "Hi, my names' Samuel Clark, but you can call me Sam."

Sam was of the opinion that he should follow up this introduction with something more, and he began to speak, but since he really couldn't come up with the right words to say, Sam stuttered some half-spo-

ken sentences before giving up and thrusting out his right hand to the woman and challenging her to a thumb wrestle contest.

The startled woman had no choice but to comply, so the two of them played three matches, with Sam winning all three (I'm pretty sure she allowed Sam to win). At the conclusion of the three matches, Sam smiled and consoled the poor lady by telling her a phrase his parents have drilled into him, "That's OK... sometimes you win, sometimes you lose." With Sam as my grandson, I am a winner.

The saga of the 'Great Purge of 2023'

We've been purging our house lately. And when I say "we," I mean my wife. My role has been to try to look too busy.

The general rule has been, if we haven't used it in 10 years, out it goes. I've seen some exceptions in the pile of junk in the garage, but so far, I haven't seen anything I can't live without.

It's mostly not my junk, anyway. Since Jennie is doing most of the purging, it's her own stuff. My time is coming. I've already been warned that she's not making room so I can spread out my stuff.

It's amazing how much stuff accumulates. Some of it is understandable — old board games that we had when our kids were little. Stuff like that.

She retired from teaching, so some of the things are teacher-related. Some are collections of stuff we no longer collect, and miscellaneous furniture, most of which needs

some type of minor repair that I'm never going to get around to.

She set up a couple of tables in the garage and started boxing things up and carrying them out. We can no longer get either one of our cars in the garage.

But the weird thing is, when we walk through the house, there doesn't seem to be anything missing or any more room. Purging hasn't made a dent. Where did all this stuff come from?

Even the spare bedroom, which has served as a storage room, is still full of junk. The hall closet may be better organized now, but it's by no means empty.

One reason we've started purging Jennie's stuff and not mine is because we can actually sell her stuff. Someone else may want it so they can clutter up their house.

My junk is pretty much worthless. At least the stuff I'm

willing to give up. The problem there is, I'm reluctant to throw out stuff I don't need or use even if it's not useable.

For instance, I have probably more than 100 T-shirts although I tend to wear the same four or five over and over. At one point, we pared down to about 30 in my closet and moved the rest to the spare room.

Jennie made a new rule a couple of years ago. For every new shirt I buy, I have to throw out two old ones. I don't always play by the rules.

I've been slowly reintroducing some of the banished shirts. Sometimes, bringing back a shirt that hasn't been worn in years is like getting a new shirt.

I'm sure Jennie has noticed that my shirt pile has been growing as it is now a shirt tower that threatens to tip over every time the closet door is opened. I just give it a shove, shut the door and hope

Ramblin' Man By David Porter



for the best.

I have a feeling that my shirts aren't going to make it through Round 2 of the Great Purge of 2023. The lucky ones might make it into the rag pile under the kitchen sink.

Why do I hang on to these worthless cotton coverings? My excuse is that they remind me of places I've been and things I've done. But do you really need 10 Kiwanis bike rodeo T-shirts when you don't even own a bike?

My remembrance excuse is weaker on the shirts I have that weren't mine to begin

with. Some were left behind by our kids when they moved out of the house, but they fit me, so I keep them. OK, they don't all fit me, and I don't wear all of them. What's my excuse for those shirts?

One of the shirts, from a college I didn't attend, is two sizes too big for me. I found it in a box. But it was free. I like free.

I don't know what gives. Do I have some fear of someday being shirtless? Am I just a shirtaholic?

I know the shirts are doomed. I don't think Jennie would take the shirt off my

back, but I'm pretty sure she'll take dozens of them from the spare room.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. I have a dozen pairs of shoes I don't wear. At least 80 pairs of socks I don't wear. Probably a dozen pairs of pants I don't wear and that many suits that I don't wear and which don't fit me anymore. One dresser drawer has nothing but underwear.

I've only touched on the textiles. I'll bet I have more than a dozen boxes in the garage that I don't even know what's in them. But it will be like Christmas opening them up.

Well, the purge is coming. I'm actually looking forward to it because when we've made more room in the house and garage, I can start buying more stuff.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblin-man.us. I already saw Jennie eyeing my empty cigar boxes.

Real Life Wellness — I'm limber as timber!

The final piece of the second root of Physical activity in our Wild Root Health system is Flexibility. This area of Physical activity has always been the hardest for me personally. I've never been flexible. If you ever see me touching my toes, you better dial 911 because I have just broken something! Even with that being said, I know how important flexibility is so I continue to work on mine every day.

Why is Flexibility important? First, when your joints stretch properly, your chance of injury goes way down. Second, the more flexible you are, the better balance you have. Flexibility is a function of your ligaments, joints, and muscles. Your muscles stretch to

keep the joints and ligaments from being injured. When your muscles don't stretch properly, the ligaments must keep the joint from being injured.

The best example I can give is a sprained ankle. When your muscles aren't strong enough to keep your foot from rolling, the ligaments get stretched and tear. If the ligaments completely tear, the joint becomes unstable and can lead to fracture of the bone. Muscles, ligaments, and joints also contain nerve endings that go to your brain and tells it where that joint is in space. If those nerve endings aren't working correctly, your balance will suffer.

Flexibility can be maintained in three ways. First, consistency is most important.

Second, dynamic and static stretching should also be used together. Finally, trying new things like Yoga and Pilates also help you stay on track and keep your flexibility at its highest level.

So, how should you stretch? Slow, steady, and consistent wins the race. Your muscles and joints are designed to be stretched slowly, with a steady pressure, every day! If you don't stay consistent, then you will quickly lose any gains within a matter of days to weeks. Slow static stretching (which means slowly stretching till you feel tightness) is always better than a fast stretch. Dynamic stretching, like arm rolls or torso twists must also be done slowly and under con-

trol in order not to tear muscle fibers.

The third way to maintain your flexibility is doing Yoga or Pilates or both. I have personally been doing yoga for more than 10 years. The best thing about yoga, in my opinion, is you can do it anywhere, anytime with no machines, special equipment or special gear. It is

the best free type of flexibility training on Earth.

This is the only problem I have with Pilates. It uses special equipment, techniques, and tools. I really like how it strengthens the core muscles around the spine and pelvis, but you need "things" to help you reach your desired results.

Both Yoga and Pilates in-

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer



crease core muscle strength and makes your balance better. I usually recommend someone starting with YouTube and putting something like "Simple Yoga poses for balance" in the search bar or if you have a specific ache or pain you want to focus on put that in the search bar (like Yoga for back pain).

Once you get the hang of the Yoga poses, put those poses into your regular routine of exercise. I have found doing your stretching at the end of your physical activity always works best. Don't try to stretch cold, tight muscles. It doesn't work very well.

Next week, I will begin my discussion of the final part of my Wild Root Health system, Stress Management.

Coffee cake recipe reminiscent of famed bakery

I got this letter from Paul Robertson with a recipe for coffee cake that sounds very easy to make. He says, "Here is a recipe for coffee cake that is reminiscent of those made by local Ste. Genevieve baker Tony Zarinelli for a few decades after WWII. It was always a real treat when our parents would stop by his bakery after Sunday mass to pick up a couple of his delicious cherry, pineapple or peanut coffee cakes, or his equally delicious donuts. This recipe is certainly nowhere near his superb pastries, but it does offer a hint of them."

Coffee Cake with Fruit

Submitted by Paul Robertson

1 9-oz package of "Jiffy" Golden Yellow cake mix
1 can of fruit filling, cherry or your favorite flavor
1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 cup milk (slightly more if needed)
1 tsp vanilla

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix "Jiffy" cake mix with sour cream, milk and vanilla until combined. Batter will be lumpy. Lightly grease an 8-inch square glass pan. Pour batter into the pan.

Drizzle fruit filling over the batter in three equi-distant lines. Should take about half a can. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes.

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



Makes 6 four inch slices. Enjoy!

Paul adds this note: "Perhaps you could drizzle the fruit filling over the entire batter. I have never tried it, so it would take additional time in the oven." Thank you, Paul, for sharing this recipe. I look forward to trying it.

Do you like homemade ice cream but don't have an ice cream maker? Here is a recipe I have made several times and it is so good. I do have an ice cream maker, but this is so easy to make. This is best eaten within 2 to 3 days of making

because it does to crystallize after a few days. This recipe calls for pound cake, and I use the pound cake found in the freezer section of grocery stores.

Strawberry Shortcake No Churn Ice Cream

2 cups heavy cream (whipping cream)
14 oz sweetened condensed milk
2 cups chopped strawberries

1 cup chopped pound cake
Whip cream until stiff peaks form. Fold in condensed milk. Stir in berries and pound

cake pieces. Place into a 9x5 loaf pan. Cover tightly with plastic wrap. Freeze at least 5 hours.

When ready to serve, let soften for 10 minutes.

Here is a tip for whipping the cream quickly. Place the bowl and the beaters in the freezer for 10 or more minutes until really cold. The cream will whip up so much faster. Also, I think you could probably add chopped nuts to this recipe if you like.

If you have a recipe to share, please send it to letscook@heraldpubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks and Happy Cooking!